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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



# The Power of Love:

## A Dream and Amplification

by

David Sparenberg

### The Dream:

An elderly man in a frumpy suit, with a hat pulled down to shade his eyes, walks toward the east. The time is early morning. The sun is ascending golden along the eastern horizon. The elder walks with a walking stick.

As the old man moves along a green snake crosses his path. The serpent approaches and coils around the man's stick. When the head of the snakes touches the walker's hand, the serpent transforms, becomes wooden and attaches to the cane.

Shortly thereafter, the elder arrives at a swift moving stream. In order to cross over, the man lays his stick down upon the water. At this, the snake detaches, again becomes green, and swims away. The wooden staff becomes a bridge.

The old man crosses the water on the bridge. As he foots his way, leafy vines, growing out of the stream, coil around the wooden causeway forming a green bower.

On the nether bank, a beautiful woman waits and embraces the elder as he arrives. This is a passionate and miraculous embrace. In the arms of the woman, the old man becomes young again.

A tree, with silver-green leaves and smiling pink flowers, branches above the embracing couple.

### Amplification:

Let's understand the process of amplification as a method for extending and expanding the range of possible interpretations by uncovering archetypal or mythological associations. This is a method developed by Carl Jung and we might even think of it as the deep ecology approach to dream work. Amplification is used to develop a field which provides an organic furtherance of texturing, coloration and back-story, as a sort of informational matrix surrounding the dream-core.

In applying amplification to the foregoing dream, it is fairly obvious that the elder is some sort of magician, possibly even a shaman. He moves by the aid of a walking stick, which suggests a disability, very likely an emotional wound or crippling. Yet the stick is also a source of power and a magical potency adheres to it. This may suggest the category of the healed healer, a basic attribute of the shaman. Even if the older is not yet such, he seems certainly on his way to becoming. We are already aware of the healing process the dream is narrating; articulating its curative progression through a series of images which possess distinctive fairy tale qualities (the naivety of supernatural encounter, the transformative power of beauty, etc.). Indeed, it is even open to consideration whether or not the elderly man is recently dead, on his way to dying, or undergoing the

shamanic “little death” which leads into an identity resurrection and renewal.

But let us not leave the walking stick quite so soon. It is called both cane and staff and suggests the potent staff of Moses, which is also associated with snakes and capable of parting water to facilitate a crossing over from bondage to freedom. This emblematic tool also identifies with the wizard’s staff or wand and is associated with such names as Merlin, Faustus and Gandalf.

A further association is possible here besides, that being the suggestion of Eden by bringing wood (tree) together with serpent, which in our initial dream culminates with a couple entwined beneath the Tree of Life. This icon is found in numerous alchemical texts as well.

There is too a green snake and this may be the magician’s familiar or totemic animal and spiritual guide. Yet both stick and serpent can be taken as phallic and it may be significant that the snake is temporarily petrified (loses the color of fertility) and becomes part of the walking stick upon human touch, and that it is only after the advent of the serpent that water appears in the dream. While contact between the head of the snake and the old man’s hand may suggest autoeroticism, that the living entity becomes dead wood says that this is an inadequate outlet for sexual potency and emotional energy.

Water is feminine—the female waters having spiritual significant in certain erotic meditations of Kabbalah and elsewhere—and the stick upon the water revives the green serpent, generates vining, and facilitates the union of man and woman. Crossing water is also an expression of transition from one condition to another or from one mode of experience to another dimension beyond reductive, stagnant or moribund normalcy.

In the dream the passage over water leads to the necessary other, a woman who may be a remembrance of waking life experience, or a spiritual image embodying the power of rejuvenation, or even the ideal woman within,

the one Jung named the anima. Of this we do not know. We know only that the other is called beautiful and her embrace is miraculous. It is indeed the embrace of the power of love. Old man becomes young in the woman’s arms and the couple is finally viewed in a tableau vivant that is paradisiacal. Here they are as were Adam and Eve beneath the flowering Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Further, through an exercise of active imagination (a technique also developed by Jung and applied by Maria Von Franz), details as to the identity of the woman on the nether bank, her back-story and fuller purpose, can be brought into play.

At last, we consider the tree, which is the culmination of vegetable imagery—the tree ascends beyond the end of the green bower of leafy vines. It has already been established that the tree is a Tree of Life image and highly symbolic. A comment can be made about the plant’s origin. The leaves are silver-green. This identifies the icon as that of an olive tree. The olive is sacred in many cultures, particularly throughout the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. As such it is a symbol of peace; in this instance of inner peace and the symbol sums up the healing nature of the dream.

Yet the tree is also a creation of imagination and a symbolic hybrid, as physical olive trees do not blossom with smiling pink flowers. The smiling quality, communicating joy, is significant and adds to the symbolic mystery, suggesting natural acceptance or re-integration. The combination of silver-green olive leaves with happy pink flowers (indicative of a slightly cooled down or contained passion) tells us that the dream concludes with a revelation of inner peace and transpersonal, if not trans-human (extended beyond human) harmony. The joyousness of these integral values may even go so far as to indicate a sense of homecoming or achievement of the alchemic opus in the dreamer.

Having presented the initial dream and an amplification demonstrating how this method

of dream enrichment works, here next is a second dream. My reader is invited to try her or his skill at the amplification process with this as the starting point. As you do so, bring into play references from your personal dream library (a useful concept picked up from Robert Moss). Have fun connecting the possibilities. You may well be amazed at what you come up with and where the methods of amplification and active imagination take you. To bring back the deep ecology suggestion one final time: the new paradigm is not about the supremacy of the "I" in autonomous isolation, but about awareness and the intricacies of relatedness.

#### Second Dream:

A fisherman is in a small boat out on the ocean. In all directions, there is only open sea.

The fisherman pulls in his net and finds that he has caught a beautiful rainbow fish.

The fisherman draws his knife and attempts to cut the fish. To his surprise, the fish vanishes only to reappear after a short interval. The fisherman attempts cutting the rainbow fish several times. Each time the same mysterious sequence occurs: before the knife blade reaches its skin, the fish vanishes. Then again, while the fisherman stares in wonderment, the fish becomes visible once more.

At last the fisherman puts down his knife. Dropping to his knees onto the planks of the skiff, he prays over the shimmering body of the fish. At this, the rainbow fish transforms into a human like creature of indeterminate sex who blesses the fisherman and places in his hand a gift from the bottom of the sea.

The gift is a pearl of unusual luster and size.

## *Another World*

by

Joel Zartman

It is a surface makes another world.  
That is what the magic of a mirror  
can show. And that's the fascination  
with which I gaze into the creek, a pond,  
or any water's body into which  
one can see depths. After the rain the creek  
is clear, the traffic underneath is seen.  
And anybody with the sense to stop  
and gaze, will gaze, being made to feel the pull  
beyond the surface of another world.